

*The Necessity and Advantage of Human
Learning.*

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED in

St. *ANTHOLIN*'s CHURCH,

Before the WORSHIPFUL

Company of SKINNERS,

On THURSDAY the 13th of *June*, 1754.

By *JOHNSON TOWERS*, M. A.

USHER of the GRAMMAR-SCHOOL at *Tunbridge*.



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L O N D O N :

Sold by Messrs. HITCH and HAWES in *Paternoster-row*; and
W. OWEN, at *Temple-bar*. M DCC LIV.

The Necessity and Advantage of Human Learning

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Before the Worshipful

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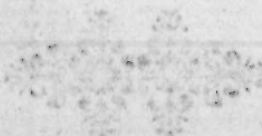
On Thursday the 13th of June 1724.

AMRS. M.A.



BY JOHN W. M.A.

Under of the Great Seal



LONDON

Sold by Messrs. HITCH and HAWES in Pall-mall; and
W. OWEN, at Temple-bar. MDCCLXXIV.

To the WORSHIPFUL
MASTER, WARDENS,
And the rest of the WORSHIPFUL
Company of SKINNERS,
THIS
SERMON,

Preached and Published at their REQUEST,

IS DEDICATED,

By their much obliged,

and most obedient Servant,

Johnfon Towers.

To the Worsnippers

MASTER WARDENS

And the rest of the Worsnippers

Company of SKINNERS

THIS

SERMON

Preached and Published at their Request

Is DEDICATED

By their much obliged

and most obedient servant

Johnston Towers

2 TIMOTHY, Chap. iv. Verse 3, latter Part.

— *And the Books, but especially the Parchments.*

THE superior Learning of *St. Paul*, to that of the rest of the *Apostles*, is as sufficiently evident from his Writings, as his greater Labour and Hardships in propagating the Gospel; for therein we not only find the strongest Demonstrations of a divine and supernatural Assistance, but the politest and most nervous Strokes of human Eloquence; the Result of an intimate Acquaintance with the Standards of good Writing in those Times, and embellish'd with every Thing beautiful in Heathen Literature.

This his extensive Knowledge of, and intimate Acquaintance with Human Learning, was, no doubt, of very considerable Use to the Apostle of the *Gentiles*; as he was thereby better enabled to combat their Errors, Sentiments, and false Principles. And we, accordingly, find him frequently supporting his Doctrine before them, with Arguments drawn as well from their own admired Authors, as from the Old Testament. — In his justly famed Oration before the most learned Society of Men then in the World, the *Areopagus* of *Athens*, we find him appealing to one

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of their own Writers, and quoting the very Words of their Poet *Aratus*. * — And in another celebrated Discourse before the polite Citizens of *Corinth*, he introduces a whole Verse out of the Poet *Menander*. † From this his usual Conduct, and from the Methods we find he took in his Ministerial Labours, the Opinion of those Expositors, seems not at all unreasonable, who imagine Books of Human Science, and some of the Heathen Writers, to have been amongst the Particulars, which we find from the Words of my Text, *St. Paul* had left behind him upon his Departure from *Troas*: These, in the Prosecution of his Ministerial Office, he, doubtless, had great Occasion for, and therefore particularly desires *Timothy* “to bring “along with him *the Books, but especially the Parchments*.” — Hence then we are encouraged by the Conduct, and excited by the Example of an Apostle, to pursue Knowledge, and get Human Understanding; which, whilst it will ennoble the Mind, enlarge its Views, and give a Relish to the innocent Pleasures of this Life, will likewise be a sure Guide to a more perfect Understanding, the grand Scheme of our Redemption, and to direct us to the Joys, and inconceivable Bliss of a future State. — For, can more be said in Behalf of Human Literature, than that it was not only used, but is still most justly admired in the Writings of an inspired Apostle? For if it was expedient to him, how much more so must it be to us, who cannot pretend to the same Degrees which he had, of supernatural Assistance; and who are daily beset on one Side with

* Acts xvii. 28.

† 1 Cor. xv. 33.

with the false Temptations of Wit and Prophaneness, and on the other with Ignorance, and its Companions, Superstition and Enthusiasm. But if Human Learning is thus requisite in the grand Concern of our immortal State; how much more visible will its Usefulness appear in the Invention and Improvement, as well of the necessary as pleasing Arts of Human Life? I shall therefore, in my following Discourse, endeavour to set forth,

1st. The Usefulness and Necessity of Human Literature in the Conduct and Management of the necessary Affairs of this Life.

2^{dly}. Its Advantage and Expediency, in the more interesting Concerns of a future Life. And

Lastly, I shall make, an Application of the Whole to the present Occasion.

1st. I shall endeavour, to set forth the Usefulness and Necessity of Human Literature in the Conduct and Management of the necessary Affairs of this Life. Man is by Nature bless'd with more glorious and noble Faculties both of Body and Mind, than any other created Being in this lower World; he is not like the Brutes, directed by Instinct only; nor are his Pleasures like theirs of a restrained Nature, and confined to the bodily Senses: He is blessed with Reason, the greatest Gift and most striking Image of the Deity, and thereby made susceptible of all its glorious Attendants, Reflection, Imagination, Harmony, and conscious

scious Benevolence. This, as Men, we are all possessed of, and this is our distinguishing Characteristick; the Pleasures of which are as inexpressibly beyond those of the sensual Appetite, which we have in common with the Brutes as its Nature is more noble and lasting. — But tho' we are all born capable of these Blessings, that a few only enjoy them in a refined Manner is too evident; for we still find in some Parts of the World, whole Nations so deeply immersed in Ignorance, that they seem directed, as it were, only by another Instinct. And amidst a People, polite as the *Romans* were, even when distinguish'd for their vast Progress in *Arts* and *Sciences*, and a refined Taste for all manner of Improvements; what Numbers were there still entire Strangers to all these nobler Sensations!

And to what can we attribute this astonishing Difference either in Individuals of the same Nation; or of a whole People at two different Periods; or of two Nations at the same Time? To what can this be owing but Human Literature? Are not the Minds of Men in general pretty near equal? When therefore we meet with some, contracted, selfish, morose, envious, delighting in Scenes of Misery and Barbarity, absolute Slaves to their Passions, and as it were quite void of their most distinguishing Quality; others open, generous, good-natur'd, pleased with the Success of their Brethren, rejoicing in Acts of Pity and Compassion, conducted by the Guide of improved Reason, enlivened by an expanded and enlighten'd Mind, mentally viewing the Attributes of their great Creator, and ever happy in an Imitation of them: How naturally do
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we ascribe this great Difference amongst them, who wanted the Light of the Gospel, only to a different Education, and to the great Blessing of Human Learning ? It would be endless to recount the Variety of Particulars, or to compare the numerous Characters we meet with in the *Roman History* of those, who were either the Plagues or Blessings of their People ; and whose different Conduct seems to have been entirely owing to their different Education : It may not, however, be improper to take Notice of the two following ; for the great Discredit that *Mark Anthony* proved to his Ancestors, and the many Calamities that he brought upon the *Roman State*, was certainly in a great Measure owing to the Want of a good Education, and his falling into the worst of Hands, and associating with Men of the blackest Characters : While on the contrary we find *Augustus*, who had been early called from his Studies by the Death of his * Father, and the Distraction of the Times, reclaimed, by an happy Intimacy with the Learned, from Vice and Misery ; and turned from Violence and Oppression, to such a Degree of Moderation, Beneficence, and Humanity, as to deserve the glorious Title of Father of his Country.

Again, If we consider the same Nation at two different Periods, and view it in its State of Infancy and Advancement ; its People at first barbarous ; of a savage and brutal Disposition ; regardless of the sacred Sanctions of the Laws of Nations ; insensible of all Compassion for the Unhappiness of others ; supported only by the Sword ; and spreading

Misery

* *Julius Cæsar*, who had adopted *Octavius*, afterwards called *Augustus*, his Son.

Misery and Slavery around ; and if we consider the same Nation afterwards capable of the most refined Sentiments of Humanity, paying a strict Regard to the Sacredness of natural and national Rights ; supporting the Weak against oppressive and lawless Tyrants ; redressing the Injured ; and, like the Sun, dispensing Comfort to all within its Influence : To what shall we attribute this extraordinary Difference, but to Human Literature ; which had improved their natural Understandings, and opened and refined their Sentiments of Humanity ? — Again, If we compare a Nation, such as there are many in this Age, with our own ; if we draw a Contrast between a People living only upon Roots and wild Fruits, or the Entrails and undress'd Flesh of Beasts ; covered only with their Skins, and, like them, living in a promiscuous Manner ; inhabiting the poorest Cots ; unacquainted even with the Produce of their own Country, and quite ignorant of Trade and Commerce,

If, I say, we compare theirs to the more improved and polite Life of our own Nation ; to our, perhaps but, too delicate Manner of preparing the Nourishments of Nature ; to our happy and well regulated Society ; to the exact Taste and Proportion of our Buildings ; to the improved Method of our Culture ; and to that Knowledge in Navigation, Trade, and Commerce, by which we enjoy the Blessings of all the known World ; how amazing is the Difference ! And to what shall we ascribe it, but to the Enlargement of those rational Faculties we have in common with other Nations ? — Thus then we find, that Human Learning is equally
conducive

conducive to the Happiness of Individuals and Nations ; and that the superior Degree of it, which one Man in a Society enjoys above another, as well as the same Society at different Periods above itself ; or two different Nations at the same Time, the one above the other, is owing respectively to their more enlarged Way of thinking ; to their rational Faculties, being open'd, improv'd, and ripen'd by Education and Learning. — The Life of Ignorance is a self-contracted and morose Existence ; the Life of Knowledge is of a dilated Nature, and Partaker of the Happiness of all around. The Ignorant and unpolish'd Age is a Stranger and Enemy to Humanity and every Degree of publick Spirit ; the letter'd and polite one, the Advocate and Friend of Compassion and Generosity. Human Learning is to the Mind of Man, more than the Microscope is to his Eye ; it opens to him, as it were, a new World in every Object around him, and is still presenting him with fresh Beauties in the incomprehensible Works of Nature. To a perfect State of Society, Learning is as necessary as the Sun itself to the vegetable Creation ; it is that, without which it cannot possibly flourish : Men may indeed exist, they may procure the bare Necessaries of Human Life, and, like inferior Beings, gratify their sensual Appetites, without the Refinement of their natural Faculties ; but without that, they can never be said to enjoy Life like rational Creatures. But this is far from being the greatest Blessing of Human Science, as will appear,

2dly. From considering its Advantage and Expediency in the more interesting Concerns of a future Life.

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As Man is born a rational Creature, so likewise a free Agent, and consequently answerable to his Creator, for his Conduct in this State of Probation. An exact Account will undoubtedly be expected from him of the Talent committed to his Charge : If then, instead of cultivating, his Conduct hath rather tended to extinguish his Reason : If the Neglect of his most distinguishing Faculty, and an entire Indulgence of his Passions, hath either obliterated all Sense of the Deity ; or rendered him superstitious or regardless of Morality ; how dismal must his Prospect in a future Life appear ? And that this is the Case with whole Nations, where Ignorance and barbarous Stupidity prevail ; where Human Arts and Sciences are unknown, is too evident a Truth to want Proof. Time would fail me to instance in the Numbers that are still both in *Asia*, *Africa*, and *America*, overshadowed with the thickest Clouds of Darkness ; those who daily offer up their Prayers to senseless and inanimate gods, created Beings of far inferior Qualities to themselves.

For as it is impossible to extinguish Human Reason so far as to divest it entirely of Reflection ; and as every reflecting rational Creature cannot help discovering, that the World is governed by some superior Being ; so, for want of a proper Cultivation of bewildered Reason, to enable it to consider the Attributes of that superior Being, it is led to worship any Thing, of which it is either groundlessly afraid, or from whence it imagines it receives any Blessings. This then is the Fountain of all Manner of Idolatry.

But

But here, it is an obvious Objection, that tho' this Doctrine might be allowed not ill calculated for the Wants of an idolatrous, yet surely it is no Proof of the Necessity of Human Letters to a Christian Congregation ; to whom, it hath pleased the Almighty to reveal his Will, and to acquaint them what *it is the Lord requireth of them*. Let us therefore consider how far Human Literature may be necessary to us, Christians in the most interesting Concern of a future Life.

Happy then are we, as we enjoy the greatest of Human Blessings, a Liberty of Conscience, and have an unerring Rule for the Direction of it, in the most momentous Concerns of a future, as well as the present Life. But what will the most perfect Rule and Direction avail, unless applied and adapted, by the best Use of our reasoning Faculties, to the particular Cases and Exigencies wherein we are concerned? Without the Application of Reason in the Explication of Scripture we must necessarily fall, as some Christians have done, into Bigotry, Superstition and Idolatry. Nor are these the only Errors we are still liable to; Self-conceit, Pride, and Infidelity, are the more common Attendants of that Liberty which we enjoy. It behoves us then not to pervert our Opportunities for Knowledge to our own Destruction ; but to consider how we may make them our greatest Blessings, by rendering them subservient in directing us to eternal Salvation.

True, indeed, it is, that, as we before observed, in regard to this Life, Man is capable of procuring the bare Necessaries of it, and prolonging his Existence, without

any great Refinement of his natural Faculties ; but not able without some Degree of such Refinement as human Learning gives, of enjoying it like a rational Creature : So in a religious Sense, every Christian is capable of acquainting himself from Scripture, with the common Duties respecting God, his Neighbour and himself ; but it requires Study, it demands Improvement of our rational Faculties, to be adequate Judges of the Bounds, and Measures, and Extent of these Duties ; and there is a Necessity for the most enlarged Understanding rightly to accommodate the Christian Virtues, in all Cases, to our particular Circumstances : Nay, even to understand the bare Letter of the Christian Law, requires a Knowledge of the dead Languages. If therefore we will avail ourselves of the Happiness we enjoy of judging for ourselves, in these weighty Concerns, let us prepare ourselves properly, by human Science, for such a Judgment : For, as to be admitted into a Society, professing the Study and Practice of the Law, is not sufficient to perfect a good Lawyer, without a diligent Application to the Studies and Business of the Profession : So neither is every Man, that is a Christian, and at Liberty to judge for himself, therefore, a comprehensive Judge of the grand Truths of our Religion : 'Tis he only, who hath closely applied to human Literature, between which, and our Religion, there is so close a Connexion, that without the Concurrence of both, no one will be able to form that exact Notion of Christianity, which arises from a View of its collective Evidence : 'Tis he only who perceives its Truth in full Force and Beauty : 'Tis he only, who by Study and Con-

Contemplation reviews the amazing Merely, and inconceivable Wisdom of his Creator, that will improve his Admiration of him, and find out the strongest Motives of Obedience. As well might the ignorant Spectator of the Orrery condemn it as a confus'd Collection of rolling Balls, or another admire it only for its beautiful and regular Motion; as a Man, void of Learning, and a Slave to Passion, condemn Christianity, or another admire it only as a beautifully invented System of Politics. But let the Astronomer view the former, who is acquainted with the Machine, and thereby reads the Motion of the celestial Bodies, and he will be struck with Wonder at the Invention of the Contriver: So let the Man of Science and Study, fairly and coolly examine the latter, and he cannot be blind to its grand Author; he must in every Part, at least from the Whole, discover the Mercy and Wisdom of the Deity.

Such then, and so great are the Blessings, which arise from human Learning: And no Doubt, from this Fountain, in a great Measure, flows the superior Happiness of this People, above that of any others, even their Christian Brethren: For what Advantage could possibly accrue from the convenient Situation of our Island, or from its various and commodious Ports, if its Inhabitants were, as they have once been, either an illiterate, ignorant People; or the dispirited Slaves of Tyranny and Superstition? Praised be God, *that* is far from being the Characteristic of the present Britons. Whilst then we enjoy these great Blessings,

sings, let us review and emulate that God-like Race of Men, whom the Deity has made his Instruments, in procuring them for, and delivering them to Posterity. The Time, alas! has been, even after the Appearance of the glorious Light of the Gospel amongst us, when Superstition and its Sister Tyranny bore an universal Sway in this present free and enlighten'd Place; but let us dwell no longer upon those darker Scenes, than just to excite a more grateful Remembrance of the noble Characters, who have dispell'd those gloomy Mists; let us rather fix our Eyes with Joy upon that renowned Reign, when Providence seems to have been determin'd, to give a finishing Stroke to Ignorance and Superstition. When this Nation was blest'd with a Queen, the most distinguish'd Princess, both for Wisdom and Prudence, the Glory of her own Sex, and a most worthy Example for ours to imitate. Queen *Elizabeth* not only thought herself born, but determined always to act for the Good of her Kingdom; enlighten'd, as it were, by her most resplendent Image, and excited by her unparallell'd Pattern, the Encouragement of Learning became the Pride and Glory of her Age; she saw with Dread, and had felt with Horror, the cruel Effects of that barbarous Ignorance and Superstition to which she had like to have fallen a Sacrifice. Thus her Subjects, equally anxious for Futurity; and our most worthy *Founder*, nobly ambitious of benefiting Thousands unknown, provided in the best Manner, to guard his Country from the fatal Yeak, to which it had too long submitted. To these most

most God-like Virtues and Persons, we may justly attribute the Knowledge, Liberty, and Happiness of the present Times. Sir *Andrew Judd*, not only then adorned the greatest Honours of this noble City, of which he was possess'd; but by the necessary Consequences of his great Conduct, still continues to reflect the brightest Lustre on them: He, sensible of the Blessing that would unavoidably arise to his Country from Learning, and the Arts and Sciences; flush'd with well-grounded Hopes of transmitting Liberty and Knowledge; and their Companions, Trade, Commerce, and Happiness, down to latest Posterity; founded the Free Grammar-School at *Tunbridge*, and in his Lifetime endowed it with very extraordinary Revenues for that Age; and with singular Care, Prudence, and Judgment had a most excellent Body of Statutes drawn up, in so elegant and judicious a Manner, as still do Honour to their supposed great Author. But amidst all the Instances of his Insight and Penetration into Futurity, pardon me, as Gratitude demands it, whilst I mention that, of his making this worthy Company, the Guardians of his School; for he thereby has not only secured to us his Rewards for our weighty and laborious Trusts, but encouraged the many additional Allowances, that you have generously been pleas'd over and above to grant us. As if, indeed, possess'd with the same expanded Sentiments, as our most memorable *Founder*, and his worthy Issue, for his * Grandson improv'd our Salaries, and to perfect the great Scheme of his

* Sir *Thomas Smith*.

his Grandfather, left, as Encouragements to Learning, Exhibitions for Youth at the Universities; you have still continued to enhance these Favours; you have not been contented with what is generally thought sufficiently Praiseworthy in the Discharge of Trusts; for you have not only perform'd them with the greatest Integrity, and most exact Justice, but have taken every Method it's Founder could have either wish'd or expected, to promote his Design: Even in its Buildings you have been so far from letting the School fall to Decay, that you have made it beautiful and ornamental, as well as commodious. May such a Conduct ever meet with due Returns of Gratitude, and, May it never fail to accomplish the great and glorious End of our *Founder*, and you our worthy Patrons; and permit me to add, May such publick-spirited Thoughts continue to inspire the Breasts of this worthy Company; May their Harmony and Unity of Sentiments, the necessary Support, let them remember, of every Society, as well as the natural World, ever, as it has hitherto done, make them flourish, and preserve them a grand Prop, as well as Honour of this distinguish'd City; May they bear in Mind, that *this* can only be derived from that good Sense and Prudence; that disinterested Integrity, which is the Effect of a good Education, and an enlarged Way of thinking, and for which they have been memorable: and above all, May they ever be as conspicuous as they now are in encouraging Labour and Industry; and as unanimous and sedulous as they have been in transmitting to Posterity, the Rights and Privileges received

ceived from their Ancestors : and by an exact Discharge of the Duties of this Life, May they, when that is ended, be deemed worthy to be made Partakers of that Glory and Bliss, which awaits the great Friends of their Country and Mankind, and will not fail, through Jesus Christ, to crown the Labours of the Benevolent and Virtuous hereafter.

F I N I S.

In the Press, and speedily will be published, by the same Author,

CÆSAR's Commentaries of his War in *Gaul*, with as literal a Translation as possible, for the Use of Schools.

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